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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
Extension Service, WASHINGTON 25, D.C.



VICTORY FARM VOLUNTEERS

April 15, 1947

For your information

TO ALL ASSISTANT STATE FARM LABOR SUPERVISORS, VFW:

Subject: News Letter

AS MAINE GOES?

A bill recently before Maine's State Legislature indicates some of the feeling many people have about the employment of youth on farms. The bill, which would have limited youth employment by farmers, happens to have failed in committee. But the very proposal shows us something about the direction the wind is blowing.

In the Extension Service, we're naturally in favor of keeping the farmer's youth labor sources open. That's to be expected, since we well know that so many farmers need youth labor to keep in production. Nevertheless, throughout the war we've stood for prudent use of these young workers and, above all, supervision of them in transit and at work.

If youth labor is misused and supervision turns up missing often enough, we can expect more State legislatures to face more bills like the one in Maine. What's to prevent it? Maine's John Downing says that "a properly organized and supervised day-haul organization would preclude much of the unfavorable reaction."

Downing goes on to suggest that the groups of people now disturbed over reports of mistreated youth labor are the ones that can help us create a good, workable day-haul set-up that will automatically eliminate their objections to youngsters working in the fields. It calls for cooperation among various groups, certainly including the farmers.

This makes sense to us. I believe we can forestall the efforts of those with youth welfare in mind to curb youth's farm employment opportunities by setting up irreproachable programs. And I think we have little honest right to forestall them until we have done so.

'IF YOU CAN TAKE IT'

"If you can take it--VERMONT has a job for you."

That's the title--with the IF in giant letters--of Mrs. Martha Buttrick's 1947 publication for recruiting youth volunteers. The subtitle is "Be a Farm Volunteer." Note that Vermont has taken the "Victory" out of the name, a trend we expect will be followed in a good many States.

The leaflet is a two-color job, with bright Kelly green for the additional shade. The three pictures used are honest-to-goodness work pictures. And the inside headings aren't designed to fool any city boy who thinks farm work might be a picnic. Here are the first five headings on the inside:

1. You Must Be Fit.
2. The Work Is Heavy.
3. It's No Vacation.
4. The Pay Isn't Large.
5. But You Will Have Fun.

Here's a new tack for VFV recruiting, if recruiting is what you'd call it. We think this leaflet ought to really do a good selection job.

EMPIRE STATE STYLE

On the subject of 1947 youth publications, New York's is also off the press. Jack Weaver sent us a copy of his little

folder entitled "New York Farm Cadets 1947."

Some of Jack's subtitles resemble those from Vermont. They go like this:

1. You Must Be Interested, Reliable, and Willing To Work.
2. You May Expect To Have a Pleasant Summer and Be Paid For Your Work.

We hope to get copies of both leaflets to send your way.

THE POSTMAN ALWAYS RINGS

"I am the father of a 16-year-old boy, who graduates from high school this coming June. He thinks of choosing farming for

his future, but as we are city folks we have our doubts as to whether this will make him happy, and we also do not know how to go about to get him on a farm...."

That's a quotation from a letter we received recently from a New York City man. It's fairly typical of letters we get every day. Most of the inquiries come from youth themselves. Sometimes they are simple post cards with a brief question, "Can you tell me how I can find a farm job?"

As you might guess, a good portion of the boys have a yen to go West. And we might add that a good portion of the inquiries come from Brooklyn. Lately we've been trying to discourage the impulse to go West, although, as always, we refer these requests to the State farm labor supervisors.

Letters like these are especially abundant in the spring of the year. They're a particular indication, I guess, that city youth are genuinely interested in the farm.

BADGER STATE REPORT

Wisconsin's good-looking printed report of farm labor from 1943 to 1946 has an interesting section on youth. From it

we learn that many vegetable growers relied entirely on youth for weeding, hoeing, and picking and that the youngsters did the largest part of the work in picking 9,600 acres of snap beans.

Apparently, Wisconsin's 1947 program will see little change where labor for special crops is concerned. That was the comment in the Badger State's current

farm labor news letter. It went on to say that "more high school and college boys will probably be looking for work this summer."

A FARM MAGAZINE SPEAKS

"What has been your experience in using inexperienced city boys for summer work?

There will be exceptions, of course, but will most of these boys work reasonably well? What kind of a job do they do on your farm? Would you hire one or more of them again if you could get them?

"Many farmers living near cities have opportunities to hire this kind of help. Should they do it? Let us know what your experience has been and we will pass it on to help others. Help is the No. 1 problem."--Editorial in American Agriculturist, March 15, 1947, entitled "What About City Boys for Farm Work?"

NORTH DAKOTA COMMENT

We always read H. W. Herbison's annual report from up North Dakota way with special interest. It's usually the way

Herbison says things and his frankness that make him good reading. Here's one statement we especially noted:

"With dollars replacing the win-the war motive, it just doesn't seem right to disrupt the educational programs for young people when it is possible to obtain adult labor to get the jobs done, even though part of the adult labor force involves use of public funds or letting in of foreign workers for short periods of employment."

RECORD CARDS FOR PICKERS

Our best correspondent during March has been John Downing, from "down east" in Maine. From him we learn that Maine

growers who hire day-haul youth this summer will have available a new set of cards for recording the amount each worker picks and earns each day. One card has been prepared for the farmer; the pickers get the other card, which is a different color. We may be mistaken, but we presume that Maine Extension is printing the cards for distribution to farmers.

John also writes that he has the blessing and good will of school authorities as his recruiting campaign gets under way this year. Already he has repeat orders for live-in boys from 40 percent of the farmers who had boys last summer. John compares this attitude of Maine farmers with their point of view early in the war years--when many said they would quit farming if inexperienced boys were the only labor available.

In the way of new ideas, Downing has mimeographed a statement about educational values of the youth program for the guidance directors and principals in his State. He sent us a copy, and we find it full of quotations from many educators about the need of young people for realistic work experience.

BRIEFLY SPEAKING....

In L. F. Snipes' latest Nebraska news letter, he expresses hope "That in 1947 a fewer number of schools will dismiss

for harvest work than dismissed in 1946."....Doris Shimkus in Michigan has worked out an excellent and complete questionnaire for getting full information about Michigan's youth program from county agents. The questions concern both "live-aways" and day-haul youth and should result in a pretty good picture of what experience has taught Extension workers about handling young workers successfully.

Total youth placements in February 1947 were 5,342, as compared with 6,407 for the same month last year....Did you know that youth placements in 13 States increased during 1946 over 1945? Placements in three States remained about the same, and there were decreased placements in the other 32 States.

IF YOU HAVE TIME TO READ....

Would any of you like to do some reading in the educational field—reading that bears significantly on our activities with urban boys and girls? I've found two good pamphlets on the subject of work experience which I recommend highly.

One of the booklets is "Work Experience," by Cocking, Dwinell, and Robinson. You can order it for 25 cents from the American Education Fellowship, 289 Fourth Avenue, New York 10, N.Y. This one specifically discusses the VFV program.

The other is "Work Experience in Secondary Education," by Dillon. It costs \$1 and can be ordered from the National Child Labor Committee, 419 Fourth Avenue, New York 16, N.Y.

'Y' COOPERATION IN CANADA

Some of the materials recently sent to me by Alex MacLaren of Canada's Ontario Farm Service Force, include an OFSF Camp Manual. I was especially interested in noting what a close relationship there has been in Canada between the Government farm labour programme (Canadian spelling) and the YW and YMCA's. As a matter of fact, the administration of the girls' camps was cooperative between the OFSF and the YWCA; the same set-up with the YMCA existed for the boys' camps.

Apparently the Canadians drew on these two organizations because of their already successful history of camp administration. Judging from their wartime results, this must have been a good idea.

We're beginning to think about field trips for the coming months when we can see young people at work. Some of you will hear from us soon about proposed visits to your States.

Sincerely yours,

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(Copy to State supervisors,
directors, editors.)

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